
By Staff Reports

Print Page

April 10, 2016 6:17PM

Supervisor Ramos to meet with Barstow area residents

Third District Supervisor James Ramos will be at Rosita's Mexican Restaurant from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday to meet with area residents.

Mayor Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre, Councilwoman Carmen Hernandez and Councilman Merrill Gracey will be hosting the event.

The restaurant is located at 540 W. Main St.

For more information or to RSVP, call 909-648-6318 or 2016jamesramos@gmail.com

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/article/20160410/NEWS/160419995>

Print Page



HIGHLAND: 20 abandoned dogs rescued by Orange County animal shelter

By [NEREIDA MORENO](#)

2016-04-08 13:42:39



An Orange County non-profit organization has adopted 20 of the 38 German shepherd-mix dogs that were [discovered in an abandoned Highland home earlier this week](#).

German Shepherd Rescue of Orange County, an organization dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating and re-homing purebred German Shepherds picked the dogs up from Devore Animal Shelter Friday morning.

“Thank you to our rescue partners: 20 of the abandoned #German #Shepherd #dogs are now headed to a better life,” officials said in a Tweet.

[Only two of the 38 German shepherd-mix dogs rescued will be available for public adoption, officials said Thursday.](#)

San Bernardino County Animal Control officers were called out Monday to a home in the 26500 block of Ward Street after the owner failed to contact authorities about three dozen dogs abandoned at the red-tagged property, officials said.

With no response to the latest round of notices left at the residence, officials said they had no choice but to remove the animals.

In all, the Devore Animal Shelter took in 38 dogs ranging in age from 6 months to about 7 years. They were mostly found to be in good health, officials said.

The unidentified owner of the dogs was located Thursday and voluntarily released them to authorities for placement. Due to the observed behavior in these dogs, only two of the 18 remaining dogs is available to the general public, said county spokesperson C.L. Lopez.

“The remaining animals will only be available to our rescue group partners. We are asking that those rescue group partners contact the Devore Animal Shelter to coordinate adoptions,” Lopez said in a statement. “Thank you to all who have expressed interest in adopting these dogs. Although only two dogs from this incident are available for general adoption, there are still many other dogs and cats in animal shelters who are in need of loving forever homes and we ask that you consider adopting one of these animals.”

For more information, contact the animal shelter at 909-386-9820.

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By Staff Reports

Print Page

April 07, 2016 4:02PM

Adult literacy program offered at library

The San Bernardino County Library provides adult literacy services to the Hesperia Branch Library. The program features individualized literacy services in one-on-one, confidential, student-centered sessions. The program is intended to equip participants with lifelong learning skills and prepare them for personal, family, careers and community success and is free. The Hesperia Library is prepared to help those who struggle with literacy. For more information, visit www.sbclib.org or call the Hesperia Branch Library at 760-244-4898.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160407/NEWS/160409785>

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Big Bear Branch Library Gets “Overdue” Makeover Starting April 11 — ROTWNEWS.com

[Big Bear Branch Library Gets “Overdue” Makeover Starting April 11](#)

in [News](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on April 10, 2016 at 12:02 am /



The Big Bear Branch Library will temporarily close from April 11 to May 20 for “overdue” renovations. (Contributed Photo)

By Michael P. Neufeld

Big Bear Lake, CA – From Monday, April 11, to Friday, May 20, the Big Bear Branch Library will be closed for an “overdue” renovation including fresh paint, new carpet, flooring, furniture and some reconfiguration of the existing layout.



San Bernardino County announced last month that the branch located at 41930 Garstin Drive in Big Bear Lake would undergo a remodel and encouraged patrons to utilize county libraries located in Running Springs, Lake Arrowhead or Crestline during the project.

NEARBY LIBRARIES

Here is a list of nearby branch libraries:

RUNNING SPRINGS – 2677 Whispering Pines Drive – Running Springs

LAKE ARROWHEAD – 27235 Highway 189 – Blue Jay

CRESTLINE – 24105 Lake Gregory Drive – Crestline

REOPENING MAY 21

The branch is scheduled to reopen at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 21 and the public is invited to celebrate with a ribbon cutting, children's performer, crafts and more.

The Friends of the Big Bear Lake Branch library will also be staging their annual book sale during the reopening event.

(60)

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FBI to brief senators on San Bernardino iPhone hack



Greg Nash

By Cory Bennett - 04/09/16 10:46 AM EDT

The FBI will soon brief the Senate Intelligence Committee on how it hacked an iPhone used by one of the San Bernardino shooters, according to the committee's leaders.

The decision comes amid pressure from lawmakers who are questioning whether the FBI told the truth during its recent standoff with Apple over an iPhone used by Syed Rizwan Farook, one of the two terrorists behind the California attack.

"They have changed their position so many times," Sen. **Ron Wyden** (D-Ore.), an Intelligence Committee member, told The Hill. "They have to tell us what's going on."

Sens. **Richard Burr** (R-N.C.) and **Dianne Feinstein** (D-Calif.) — the Intelligence Committee's leaders — said a briefing is in the works, but that some particulars may be kept classified.

The FBI has already informed both Burr and Feinstein about its hacking tactics.

"I think that the important thing for the committee," Burr said, is learning the method fit "within the letter of the law."

"The sensitivity of it may dictate that there's less specifics communicated to members than more," he added, leaving a committee meeting on Thursday.

Any attempt to withhold information could frustrate FBI critics, such as Wyden, who believe the agency was using the emotionally-charged terror case in San Bernardino to set a precedent that would allow investigators to access other locked devices.

In February, the FBI said it was impossible to crack shooter Syed Rizwan Farook's iPhone without Apple's help, and took the tech giant to court to make it unlock the phone.

But the agency surprisingly reversed course in late March, announcing that it been shown a novel hacking tactic not requiring Apple's assistance. The Justice Department subsequently **dropped** its case.

Capitol Hill critics such as Wyden say the whiplash highlights the FBI's ever-changing position on encryption.

"It's time for the FBI and the DOJ to stop throwing spaghetti against the wall and hoping something will stick," Wyden **said** in a Medium post Thursday.

In a separate case in Brooklyn, the FBI on Friday said it **will continue** to seek Apple's help in unlocking the iPhone of a convicted drug trafficker. The decision shows that the courtroom battle over government access to encrypted devices is far from over.

The Obama administration, Wyden said, "has had trouble being straight with the American people about what it wants."

It's not just Wyden and FBI critics that wants more details on the iPhone hack. The bureau's backers believe the agency should be talking to the Intelligence panel.

"I think it's important for the Intelligence Committee to understand some of this, yes," Feinstein told reporters this week. "But I think parts of it

should remain classified.”

Feinstein is working with Burr on a bill **that would allow** the FBI to force companies like Apple to provide “technical assistance” to the FBI when it requests encrypted data.

Other Intel panel members, such as Sen. **Angus King** (I-Maine), told The Hill they’re interested in whatever the FBI is able to offer.

“I suppose it’s always good to have information, so we’ll see what they tell us,” King said this week.

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Obama's Refinance Program

By LowerMyBills

Obama Eliminates Fee For Homeowners Who Switch To A 15yr Fixed **Read More**

Outside the Intelligence panel, Sen. **Tom Carper** (Del.), the Senate Homeland Security Committee’s top Democrat, said he has also reached out to the FBI about how it cracked Farook’s phone.

Burr indicated that his briefing didn’t include a complete technical run-down, perhaps giving a preview of what other senators might learn.

“I’m not sure that the committee or the chairman, or the vice chairman, will know exactly how it was accessed,” he said.

TAGS: Dianne Feinstein, Richard Burr, Angus King, Tom Carper, Ron Wyden

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SAN BERNARDINO SHOOTING: Apple says FBI never interested in evidence on iPhone (UPDATE)

By [BEAU YARBROUGH](#)

2016-04-08 12:36:41



The U.S. Department of Justice's attempt to pressure Apple into unlocking an iPhone once used by one of the two people responsible for the Dec. 2 terrorist attack in San Bernardino was all about setting a precedent, not getting evidence — and the department's actions in New York prove it, Apple Inc. officials said Friday.

Earlier in the day, the Department of Justice sent a short letter to U.S. District Court Judge Margo Brodie, saying it will not modify its request to get Apple's help in a Brooklyn case.

“The government does not intend to modify its March 7, 2016, application,” the brief letter from Robert L. Capers, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, reads in part. “The government's application is not moot and the government continues to require Apple's assistance in accessing the data that it is authorized to search by warrant.”

The letter comes almost two weeks after the department declared that it didn't need Apple's help in the San Bernardino case after all, having found another way into an iPhone 5C issued to Syed Rizwan Farook by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, which employed him as a health inspector.

In February, U.S. Magistrate Judge James Orenstein ruled that Apple could not be forced to assist government investigators against its will and said Congress ought to be the ones to take up the issue. The Brooklyn phone in question is an older model iPhone used by a methamphetamine dealer who pleaded guilty in October. As in the aborted attempt with the phone in the San Bernardino case, the federal government is relying on the 1789 All Writs Act, which gives the courts the power to order third parties to technically assist authorities.

The Department of Justice appealed the ruling in March.

Apple attorneys, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they were “disappointed” in the department's decision to go forward with the case in New York, in a phone call with reporters.

And, they said, the DOJ's decision to continue pressuring Apple to help out with what they described as a “routine law enforcement matter” leading up to a May sentencing hearing, underscores that the federal government mostly wanted to set a precedent in San Bernardino so that technology providers could be forced to unlock encrypted devices.

Although the department got into Farook's phone with a tool provided by a third-party source rumored to be an Israeli cybersecurity firm, FBI director James Comey has said the tool won't work on more recent versions of Apple's iPhone, which include encryption technology in their hardware.

Apple attorneys said Friday that they do not intend to sue to get the Department of Justice to say how they unlocked Farook's phone, as they're confident that the technique will have a “short shelf life,” as older iPhones are replaced with more sophisticated models.

Federal officials have not said what, if anything, they ended up getting off of Farook's work phone. He and his

wife, Tashfeen Malik, destroyed two personal phones before the Dec. 2 attack at the Inland Regional Center, in which they killed 14 and wounded 22.

RELATED

[Senate bill draft would prohibit unbreakable encryption](#)

[Tool used on iPhone does not work on all devices](#)

[FBI debates sharing iPhone hacking details with Apple](#)

[FBI breaks into Farook's iPhone](#)

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

FBI's Los Angeles head, David Bowdich, heads off to DC post

By Beau Yarbrough, The Sun

Saturday, April 9, 2016



David Bowdich, the FBI's highest-ranking agent in Los Angeles and a key figure in the San Bernardino mass shooting investigation, is leaving California to become the third-highest ranking officer in the bureau.

"It came up a few months ago," Bowdich said Saturday afternoon, as he was out walking his dog, a day after packing up his office .

FBI Director James B. Comey invited him out to Washington in February, he said, and [offered him the associate deputy](#)

[director position](#).

"He felt we had managed to get where we needed to go at that point" with the investigation into the [Dec. 2 terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino](#), which left 14 dead and 22 wounded.

"He said 'look, you can support it from here, and have greater impact on the organization,'" Bowdich said. "I've been very focused on the families and, quite frankly, I told the families that I'd be here to the end because, I never dreamed this would happen. I never raised my hand for this and didn't expect it to happen."

Leaving the families of the Dec. 2 victims is the thing that gave him the most pause in taking his new position, he said.

"I think it's important to me that the families know that there will be no light between the shields as far as we handle this as an organization going forward," Bowdich said. "If we were not in a place where I was reasonably comfortable, I would not go. That doesn't mean it's over: far from it, far from it."

He expects the prosecution of [Enrique Marquez Jr.](#), who allegedly provided the assault rifles that Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik used in the Dec. 2 attack, will "likely take a long time."

About 20 agents are still combing through evidence related to the case.

"We're trying to make sure we leave nothing undone," Bowdich said. "There's a lot going on behind the scenes to make sure we've examined every piece of evidence, be it digital or physical."

The piece of evidence that's been most in the news of late is the iPhone 5C issued to Farook by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, which he worked for as a public health inspector.

Privacy advocates and Apple Inc., the maker of the iPhone, contend the federal government didn't really expect to find any useful evidence on the phone — Farook and Malik destroyed their personal phones before the attack and a hard drive removed from their personal computer has never been found. Instead, the government allegedly wanted Apple to get around encryption features on the phone to [establish a legal precedent](#) that would let federal agencies compel cellphone makers to do the same going forward, privacy advocates say.

Not so, said Bowdich.

“Right now, we continue to extract the data from this phone,” he said. “I think it’s important that the public understands that it was not our goal to draw a line in the sand on encryption. What it was, was a piece of evidence.”

Bowdich has been in charge of the Los Angeles office since September 2012. A former New Mexico detective, he has worked for the FBI since 1995. In his new role, he will oversee most of the bureau’s so-called non-operational branches and divisions.

“Dave is a first-class guy,” San Bernardino Police Chief Jarrod Burguan said Saturday. “He did a tremendous job of keeping us together as a team. ... At the end of the day, (the Dec. 2 investigation) was going to become federal investigation, but Dave went out of his way to make sure we were kept in the loop and stayed a unified front.”

Bowdich will be replaced by Deirdre Fike, who currently heads up the FBI office in Anchorage.

“She’s trading in her snowshoes for her flip-flops,” he said. “She’s a solid agent and she will be every bit as committed.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160409/fbis-los-angeles-head-david-bowdich-heads-off-to-dc-post>

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SAN BERNARDINO SHOOTING: Renaissance Faire honors victim Daniel Kaufman

By [LISSET MARQUEZ](#)

2016-04-09 16:16:00



Peace, love and renaissance.

It's not only the theme of the 54th season of The Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Irwindale, but Mary Wine would like to think it's also in honor of late fellow cast member Larry Daniel Kaufman, known to friends as Daniel, who was killed Dec. 2 in the terrorist attack in San Bernardino.

"He was a lover of life," said Wine, Kaufman's longtime friend. "He would have approved."

Kaufman, 42, was a devoted participant of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire and a member of the Guild of Saint Cuthbert, which organizes and conducts pageants and Renaissance Pleasure Faire parades.

As the fair — billed as the world's oldest Renaissance Faire — opened Saturday at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area, members now grapple with a very modern issue — terrorism.

"When you go to the fair, you're taken back to gentler, kinder times," said Kristin Carty, who said she considered Kaufman as a brother. "But this year, there's a dark cloud over it that we live in a society where we're not safe anywhere anymore."

Carty, who retired from the fair about five years ago, said the fair's existence is even more important this year: to serve as a reminder to others how to be accepting and nonjudgmental.

Wine said many in the group have discussed the topic, during rehearsals, but that's not something that will come up during the run of the fair.

"There are a lot of us, who for the first time this year, we are coming together and dealing with our grief," she said.

Everyone is dealing with it differently. Wine said she brought in a photo of Kaufman and had it placed under a tree that he usually sat under to have lunch.

A memorial will be held May 8, which will not only honor Kaufman but those who have died since the last run.

Kaufman, a 16-year veteran, will be missed, most notably in the five daily parades, said Ryan Reyes, Kaufman's partner of three years.

Most participants just wave their banners during the parade. Not Kaufman; he was often the one banging his tambourine on the banner pole, twirling and leaping. He preferred being in the back of the parade to do just that.

"That will be missed," he said. "If he were running in a hobby horse, he would make the horse twerk. Things like that are so random, but he would just do it to get your attention."

And he got it wherever he went.

“Just by being Daniel,” Reyes said.

Even though he'd later complain about aches and pains, it didn't stop Kaufman from going back to his parade shenanigans the next day.

This year, Reyes was set to take over as banner captain, a title previously held by his partner. Initially, Reyes said he was committed to doing it, but as time went on, he knew he couldn't do it without Kaufman. He is taking the year off from those responsibilities but plans to periodically participate in the parade.

Reyes said the past couple of weeks have been tough as preparations for the fair took place. Last Sunday's dress rehearsal was the most difficult.

“It was extremely hard to turn and look and not see Daniel anywhere in the parade,” Reyes said.

It seems like an element is missing, he said.

“It was still the same parade, but it didn't have the Daniel twirling, the Daniel touch. But it was still a good parade,” Reyes said.

On opening day, Reyes not only wore a shirt that was handmade for Kaufman by his aunt, his belt and pouch were previously handed down to him by his partner. And the jewelry is either handmade or was purchased by Kaufman.

Wine said she has found a sense of healing while preparing for the fair.

“I was out there (Friday), and I miss Daniel greatly. At the same time I feel closer to him there than anywhere else,” Wine said.

Daniel was such a part of life that I just cannot sink into misery — “because that's not what he would want,” Wine said.

It'll be hard the evening of the memorial when the bell is rung, and his named is called out. And then the show goes on. And it will go on for future generations, Wine said, to show a place where Kaufman felt at home.

Carty, who knew Kaufman for 23 years, said she plans on being at the memorial.

At his funeral last year, Carty said she asked others to smile and be compassionate to strangers.

“Daniel loved unconditionally and never asked for anything in return,” she said.

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FULL COVERAGE: [San Bernardino shooting](#)

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Inland Empire Muslim students stereotyped, ridiculed fight back with information

PULL QUOTE: “Here we’re more about bringing awareness about Islam.” — Naomi Mustafiz, Valley View High’s Muslim Student Association president

By Imran Ghori, Riverside Press-Enterprise, ighori@pe.com, [@ImranGhori](https://twitter.com/ImranGhori) on Twitter

Sunday, April 10, 2016

When Shahriyar Mustafiz started a Muslim Student Association at his high school in Moreno Valley, another student jokingly asked if they would be teaching people how to make a bomb.

A year earlier, as a Valley View High School sophomore, some students pushed and shoved him in the locker room because of his religion around the time Osama Bin Laden was killed.

“They thought it was hilarious,” recalled the 20-year-old Mustafiz, who now attends Moreno Valley College.

He started the club — after visiting a similar one as part of a college day at UCLA — as a place where Muslim students didn’t have to be afraid and as a way to educate fellow students about their faith. Today, his younger sister Naomi Mustafiz, an 18-year-old senior, is president of the club. She and other members say they feel welcome on campus, where they’ve held activities to counter negative stereotypes about Islam.

It’s a mission she feels strongly about given the increasingly hostile climate for Muslims since the Dec. 2 mass shooting in San Bernardino by a radicalized couple who were reportedly inspired by the Islamic State terrorist group.

Political rhetoric has also intensified, with Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump calling for banning Muslims from entering the country. Last week, Sen. Ted Cruz, his main rival for the GOP nomination, suggested that Muslim neighborhoods should be under surveillance. The situation is also playing out on California campuses, where a fall survey found more than half of Muslim students have been bullied. Still, some are trying to stop the stereotypes and ridicule with information about their faith.

CAMPUS CLIMATE CHANGING

Iman Bhaghani, a 17-year-old junior at Corona’s Santiago High School, can relate to the Moreno Valley students.

She co-wrote an article for the student newspaper headlined “Not All Muslims Are ISIS” in December to challenge negative stereotypes after the attack.

“We are disgusted, horrified and shocked just like the rest of the world, and we take offense when we hear Trump’s and others’ anti-Muslim statements,” the article stated.

Bhaghani said she hears more negative remarks on campus due to the presidential race and the debate

over terrorism.

“Whatever they hear Trump saying about Muslims they put that idea or mentality on every Muslim,” she said.

“I don’t mind explaining my religion I’m very proud to have,” she added. “I just wish there was more openness about it and less negativity about it.”

Sarah Amro, an 18-year-old Riverside City College student, was shocked to see a friend and former Santiago classmate post pictures of the Quran on Facebook, claiming that the religious book of Muslims promotes violence.

When she confronted her friend, “She was like, ‘You’re not like that, but most of you are like that,’” Amro said.

Amro, who also takes classes at Fullerton College, said she hasn’t had any problems on campus. But, in December, while at a Wal-Mart parking lot in Fullerton, she found herself confronted by a man who parked his car behind her and started yelling at her. He called her a terrorist and told her to get out of the country, Amro said.

‘INTOLERANCE ... ON THE RISE’

Even before the attack, a report by the California chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations released in October concluded that at least 55 percent of Muslim students have faced bullying.

That report, which surveyed 600 students between the ages of 12 and 18 across the state – including some in the Inland area – found that 52 percent experienced verbal abuse and 9 percent experienced physical violence. Twenty percent reported offensive comments from a teacher, administrator or other school official.

Among female students who wore a hijab — a scarf or head-covering worn by some female Muslims to show modesty — 29 percent reported having it touched unwelcomingly by another student. Twenty-seven percent of these students said they felt discriminated against by a teacher.

Since Dec. 2, the problem has only grown, based on reports to the organization and from human relations commissions in different cities, said Fatima Dadabhoy, a senior civil rights attorney for CAIR’s Los Angeles chapter and lead author of the report.

“I think the climate of intolerance has been on the rise,” she said, citing Trump’s comments about Muslims.

TRAINING TRIED

Inland school districts say their anti-bullying rules guard against such behavior.

Tim Walker, director of pupil services at Riverside Unified School District, said faculty and staff get anti-bullying training. Campuses host prevention assemblies and other activities, he said. Student handbooks include a page to report bullying that can be filed anonymously, Walker said.

Walker said he doesn’t know of any reports of Muslim students being bullied at district schools.

“It hasn’t been an issue for us,” district spokesman Justin Grayson said.

Earlier this year, CAIR sent copies of the report to principals in that district and the San Bernardino City Unified School District because of their proximity to the site of the Dec. 2 attack and concerns that their students could see more bullying.

Maria Garcia, a spokeswoman for the San Bernardino school district, could not be reached for comment.

Dadabhoy said the survey found that “there’s been kind of a normalization to it,” where students will make negative remarks about Islam or Muslims in a joking way.

Muslim students say they feel welcome, but “then you ask specific questions and, ‘Oh yeah, my friends do call me terrorist. Oh yeah, they pull my hijab,’” she said.

Survey results show some students don’t want to report such incidents to school officials, with only 42 percent saying doing so resolved the problem. Muslim students are reluctant to call more attention to themselves, she said.

“At the same time they speak out, they’re also going to be targeted as different again,” Dadabhoy said.

Dadabhoy said the group, which also offers training for dealing with Islamophobia, hopes to do more outreach with Inland schools.

“I think a lot of schools they want to do stuff, they want to do training (but) they don’t know where to go right now,” she said.

ISLAMIC AWARENESS

At Valley View, Naomi Mustafiz said the club has just as many non-Muslim members as Muslims, which fits with its goal to dispel misconceptions about Islam.

“Here we’re more about bringing awareness about Islam,” she said.

In November, the group held an Islamic Awareness Week on campus that included an “Islam 101” talk about the basics of the faith, a documentary about a mosque that was burned down and lunch activities.

They even staged a hijab day, on which they passed out 60 scarves to students and staff who wore hijab for a day.

“They really appreciated the experience it gave them,” she said.

Naomi Mustafiz, who began wearing the hijab as a sophomore, remembered feeling nervous and encountered misunderstandings such as when one student asked if she had suddenly gotten married.

While wearing hijab makes her and other women who choose to do so more identifiable as Muslims, she said, it’s also resulted in unexpected support.

Once, a stranger at a grocery store approached her to say he was sorry about the negative comments made about Muslims in the news.

At a recent meeting, Naomi Mustafiz was joined by Hajer Dawoody, an 18-year-old Valley View graduate and UC Riverside freshman, for a talk about the difference between culture and religion and

how they're often confused as the same.

They noted that there are Muslims in many countries, not just Arab ones, and that their cultures are often different.

“Not everybody practices Islam the same way because culture and religion form together to create identity,” she said.

Adaisel Rosales, 18, a Valley View senior who is not Muslim but belongs to the club, said she's learned a lot from its meetings.

“It really contrasted the idea of what is supposed to be Islam and what (you see) on TV,” she said.

BY THE NUMBERS

An October survey asked 600 Muslim students in the state, ages 12-18, about bullying on campus.

52: Percentage reporting verbal bullying

9: Percentage reporting physical bullying

19: Percentage reporting cyberbullying

27: Percentage of girls wearing hijab reporting discrimination from a teacher or administrator

Source: Council on American-Islamic Relations

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/social-affairs/20160410/inland-empire-muslim-students-stereotyped-ridiculed-fight-back-with-information>

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The New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/1qfENmK>

U.S.

Only Hard Choices for Parents Whose Children Flirt With Terror

By MATT APUZZO APRIL 9, 2016

FREMONT, Calif. — The banging on the door jolted Sal Shafi awake. F.B.I. agents were looking for his son. “Where’s Adam?” they yelled. “Where’s Adam?”

Terrified, Mr. Shafi led the agents, guns drawn, up the stairs toward his son’s bedroom. He watched as they led his 22-year-old son away in handcuffs, backed by evidence of Adam Shafi’s terrorist ambitions.

He had come to the attention of officials not by a well-placed informant or a sting operation. His father, concerned and looking for help, had simply picked up the phone and led the government right to his son. For months, over the objections of his lawyer, Mr. Shafi had been talking to the F.B.I., believing he was doing the right thing.

“My God,” he thought, soon after the arrest in July. “I just destroyed Adam.”

Had things been different, Mr. Shafi, 62, a Silicon Valley executive, might

have become a much-needed spokesman for the Obama administration's counterradicalization campaign. Who better to talk to other parents about the seductive pull of terror organizations? Trust the government, he would tell them. They do not want to take away your children.

Despite nascent efforts to steer young people away from terrorism, the government's strategy remains largely built on persuading people to call the F.B.I. when they first suspect a problem.

"Alert law enforcement," Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch said in December. "It could simply be your neighbor having a bad day. But better be safe than sorry."

For parents, particularly those who see their children as misguided but not dangerous, the decision to make that call can be agonizing. Do you risk sending your son to prison? Or hope things improve and he does not hurt anyone?

The Justice Department praised Mr. Shafi's efforts to save his son, but said in court that his son was living a "terrifying" double life. Prosecutors said Adam Shafi was "such an unpredictable threat" that he was too dangerous to be anywhere but a jail cell. Mr. Shafi and others, though, say the case shows that there were never any alternatives.

"This is an abject failure, that there is no system in place that doesn't result in spending 20 years in jail," said Seamus Hughes, a former National Counterterrorism Center official who once helped implement the Obama administration's strategy for countering violent extremism.

The Justice Department's campaign against American supporters of the Islamic State is rife with examples of family members acting out of desperation. Mothers have hidden passports and money to keep their sons from traveling. In Minnesota, a fight broke out as relatives tried to keep a young man from flying out of the country. In Texas, a family lured a 19-year-

old home from Turkey by tricking him into thinking his mother had fallen ill.

Mr. Shafi chose a different route. He did what the government asked. His story is a desperate search for someone to help his son.

A Frantic Call

The Shafis were vacationing in Cairo in the summer of 2014, visiting extended family, when they awoke on a Saturday to find Adam gone. He sent a text message to a younger brother, saying he had left “to protect Muslims.”

Mr. Shafi has never been deeply religious — “don’t do bad things,” is how he describes his faith — but his son had embraced religion. Outwardly at least, that meant charity. He made sandwiches and delivered them to San Francisco’s homeless. He talked about opening a free health clinic. Perhaps, Mr. Shafi thought, Adam, who was 21 at the time, was at a mosque working on a social cause.

But when he did not come home, Mr. Shafi became frantic. A protective father of five, he had installed tracking software on his children’s phones. But it did not work overseas. On Sunday, he called the American Embassy in Cairo. An official there was polite but dismissive and told him to wait another day.

“Maybe he’s been recruited,” Mr. Shafi said. That grabbed the man’s attention.

Mr. Shafi now says he was merely trying to prod the embassy into helping his son. But he acknowledged that, at the time, he was also thinking about the parents on the news who discovered that their children had fled to join the Islamic State.

At the embassy later that day, Mr. Shafi told officials that he worried that his son might be following extreme imams online, according to court documents. His son, he said, had been “grieving about what is happening to

Muslims” abroad. “Maybe he is in Syria? Iraq? Gaza?” Mr. Shafi said.

It turned out that Adam Shafi was in Turkey, a common gateway for foreign fighters to Syria. Not long after the embassy meeting, he texted his family that he was on his way back. He told his family he had gone to witness the plight of refugees there.

“Why didn’t you let us know?” Mr. Shafi demanded. He remembers his son’s response. “He said, ‘You wouldn’t have let me go.’ Which is true. You say you’re going to visit refugees by yourself? Hell no.”

Back home in California, Mr. Shafi’s lawyer ordered him not to talk to the F.B.I. But when two agents arrived at the house a few weeks later, Mr. Shafi invited them in.

“We don’t have criminal minds,” Mr. Shafi said later. “Maybe I’m naïve. I’ve never dealt with the authorities before. I wanted to cooperate.” He arranged for the agents to interview Adam at a coffee shop.

In conversations over many months, court documents show, Mr. Shafi told the agents that he worried about his son’s depression and said he had encouraged counseling. Sometimes, when the television showed people suffering in war-torn Syria, his son would leave the room and cry, Mr. Shafi said.

With his son under F.B.I. investigation and facing few options, Mr. Shafi arranged for him to visit a suspected terror financier, Armin Harcevic, in a nearby jail. Mr. Shafi told the F.B.I. that he hoped it would help him “see the error in his ways or at least the grave consequences,” according to court documents.

Once, Mr. Shafi said, the agents mentioned the Boston Marathon bombing and said they believed his son had been radicalized. Mr. Shafi laughed. “I don’t think so,” he told them. “I can assure you that Adam is not

violent.”

The F.B.I. had good reason to doubt those assurances — agents had been secretly eavesdropping on Adam Shafi’s phone conversations.

“I just hope Allah doesn’t take my soul until I have at least, like, a couple gallons of blood that I’ve spilled for him,” he said in one conversation last June, according to court records. He also mused about killing American soldiers.

In another call, he said the Islamic State killed too indiscriminately, but he admired the Nusra Front, which is linked to Al Qaeda. Nusra, like the United States, is fighting both the Islamic State and the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad. But it is a designated terrorist group, and supporting it is illegal. “I am completely fine dying with these guys,” he said, according to court documents.

Then, on June 30, 2015, Mr. Shafi’s phone-tracking software alerted him that his son was at the San Francisco airport, at a gate for Turkish Airlines, trying to go to Turkey again.

Sent Home From Turkey

Mr. Shafi scrambled to contact overseas relatives to intercept his son in Istanbul, but F.B.I. and Homeland Security agents had met him at the gate and were interviewing him at the airport. He told them that he no longer wanted to live in the United States and that he wanted to help the refugees in Turkey.

“Adam claimed that some people helped by building a house, while others picked up a gun,” Christopher Monika, an F.B.I. agent, wrote in court documents. Adam Shafi told the F.B.I. he was not going to pick up a gun. Eventually, the agents sent him home.

But days later, the F.B.I. went to the Shafi home with a warrant for

attempting to support a terrorist organization — a charge that carried up to 20 years in prison — and led Adam Shafi away in handcuffs. His case was kept under seal while his family and his lawyers tried to negotiate a way out. Normally, that means a plea deal and a hope for leniency. Mr. Shafi pitched something else — a program in which counselors, mental health experts and religious leaders worked with Adam to set him straight. If all went well, Mr. Shafi hoped, his son could avoid prison and a criminal record.

Though the White House and a congressional task force have endorsed this concept, no such program exists. So Mr. Shafi tried to create one. He flew to Washington in November to attend a Brookings Institution seminar on radicalization. There he met Daniel Koehler, a German de-radicalization expert who offered to help.

“There have simply been too many cases of families who didn’t have any help,” Mr. Koehler said in an interview. “I thought back then that this could be a good test case.”

The F.B.I. has quietly and slowly embraced the notion of interventions. In a few cities, agents work with parents, mental health experts, community leaders and sometimes religious figures to help minors or mentally ill people who agents believe have the intent, but not the capability, to hurt people. Though civil libertarians — and some F.B.I. agents — are skeptical of what they see as blurring the line between social work and law enforcement, supporters say interventions are an alternative to long-term surveillance, which strains F.B.I. resources.

Law enforcement officials said they have offered interventions to only about a dozen people, and they acknowledge that it is too soon to say whether they work.

At 22, Adam Shafi was not eligible for such an intervention, but his father and lawyers remained optimistic. The government did not dismiss the idea out of hand, they said. Then came the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, Calif.

“You see these events that narrow the universe of what’s possible,” said Joshua Dratel, a New York lawyer representing Adam Shafi. There would be no deal.

In December, the Justice Department unsealed the case and prepared for trial. In court documents, prosecutors said that neither a well-intentioned father nor the threat of an F.B.I. investigation were enough to steer Adam Shafi away from terrorism. Mr. Shafi’s efforts aside, prosecutors said, his son was simply too dangerous to remain free.

The process has shaken Mr. Shafi’s faith, both in his decisions as a parent and in his government.

“Every minute, I just imagine him in that solitary confinement, facing 20 years, because I cooperated with the government,” he said, adding, “It’s a horrible feeling. I can’t get rid of it.”

Less than a year ago, he had offered to quit his job and help build support for government counterterrorism programs. His message now to parents of troubled or confused children? “Don’t even think about going to the government.”

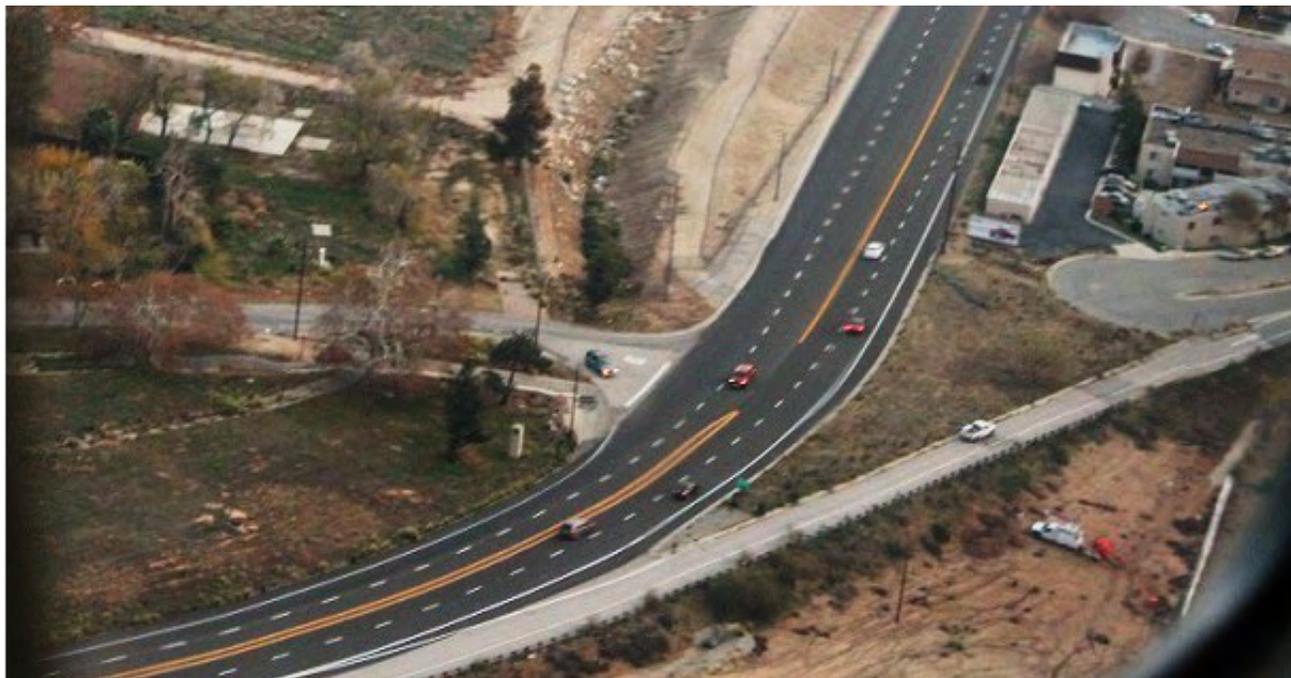
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A version of this article appears in print on April 10, 2016, on page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: Limited Options to Keep Children From Terrorism.

Highway 18 Thrie-Beam Median Project Set To Begin (Weather Permitting) — ROTWNEWS.com

[Highway 18 Thrie-Beam Median Project Set To Begin \(Weather Permitting\)](#)

in [News](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on April 10, 2016 at 12:04 am /



If Mother Nature cooperates, construction of the \$4 million thrie-beam median barrier on Highway 18 will begin near Sierra Way in San Bernardino on Monday, April 11. (Aerial Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

By Michael P. Neufeld

Mountain Communities – Mother Nature may play a role in the actual start date for the \$4 million thrie-beam median project on Highway 18 between Sierra Way in San Bernardino and the Crestline Bridge (Highway 138).



Lower Waterman Canyon Road is one of 10 planned openings in the barrier. (Aerial Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

The contractor — Alcorn Fence Company — announced it would begin the project to reduce cross-over accidents on the four-lane section of Highway 18 on Monday, April 11. However, that start date is dependant on the weather.

FIRST WORK ZONE

The first work zone is to be located on the lower end of Highway 18 between mile marker 12 and 15 to meet environmental constraints involving the small drab flycatcher (bird).

“Once the environmental requirements are met,” according to Caltrans District 8 Director of Operations Haissam Yahya, *“the project will move uphill to just below Highway 138 (Crestline Bridge) and continue downhill until the project completion at the end of summer (weather permitting).”*



The speed limit in the actual work zones each weekday will be 45 miles per hour. (Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

SPEED LIMIT UPDATE

Here's the latest information on the speed limit in the 10-mile stretch of Highway 18 where the barrier will be constructed.



Slow for the cone zone as traffic fines can be doubled in work zones. (Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

The speed limit reduction — from 55 to 45 miles per hour with the left lane closed in both directions in two-mile increments during work hours — will be enforced during the work hours in the actual work zone, which will be signed each work day.

“This will enhance safety for the workers and motorists,” California Highway Patrol Lieutenant Commander Tel Preszler explained.

Work hours Monday through Thursday are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

At the end of the work day crews will cover the 45 mile per hour signs and the speed limit will return to the posted 55 miles per hour speed limit.

The CHP reminds Highway 18 motorists that traffic fines can be doubled in the work zones.



Once environmental requirements related to the flycatcher (bird) are met the project will move up Highway 18 to near the Crestline Bridge (Highway 138). (Aerial Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

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SAN BERNARDINO: City names Brent Mason as new finance director

By [RYAN HAGEN](#)

2016-04-08 14:17:21



City officials have chosen a new finance director: Brent Mason, who held that position in Riverside from 2010 until April 1.

Mason's appointment must be confirmed by the City Council, which is scheduled to vote April 18, but he impressed City Manager Mark Scott with his application, said city spokeswoman Monica Lagos.

"Mark has done multiple reference checks — not just references he (Mason) provided, but people Mark knows, and they've all been great," Lagos said. "He feels really confident in this candidate."

If approved, Mason will start April 19.

San Bernardino has had high turnover in many departments since filing for bankruptcy protection in 2012, but particularly in the Finance Department. Since Scott Williams was pushed out in March 2015 after just months on the job — the third finance director to leave in three years — finances have been overseen by consultants and by Deputy City Manager Nita McKay, whose position focused on finances.

McKay, who joined the city in fall 2014, resigned effective March 31 without giving an official reason.

Mason said he's aware the city has lacked stability in the Finance Department, but he thinks his management style will be a good fix for that.

"I'm very easy-going," Mason said Friday. "I'd like to understand thoroughly what's going on before I react and make decisions, so I think that's going to bode well for a place that's had lots of transitions over a number of years."

Mason, 50, joined Riverside in 1994 as city controller and became finance director in 2010. Riverside, which faces an estimated \$8 million deficit for the fiscal year that ends June 30, got a new city manager and new assistant city manager May 4.

"I officially retired," Mason said of his departure from Riverside. "There was a management change there, and they saw fit to go in a new direction."

A San Bernardino native who now lives in Redlands, Mason said he was excited to work on both the bankruptcy and the city's day-to-day finances.

"I look forward to rolling my sleeves up and digging in," he said.

Mason said he and his wife Jill have 11 children, several of them adopted children with special needs.

Searches are also underway for an interim public works director and an assistant city manager, Lagos said.



SAN BERNARDINO: Neighborhood finding solace since 12-year-old boy's shocking slaying

By [BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA](#)

2016-04-10 22:40:05



SAN BERNARDINO – If it's possible for two people to be closer than family, Terrance and Jason Spears were it.

The cousins, 14 and 12-years-old respectively, laughed together and played together. The boys were also together the day Jason was killed by a bullet fired by an unknown shooter on March 12 as the boys walked to a nearby store to get some snacks.

“He was funny, he made me laugh and we loved each other,” Terrance said hours after the fatal shooting at a candlelight vigil held for the middle

school boy.

More than a hundred people attended the vigil asking for a stop to the gang violence that's plagued the small two-block area from Rainbow Lane to 21st Street and from Orange Avenue to Reedy Avenue where Jason and his family lived.

Nearly a month after the slaying, the memorial site where the 12-year-old collapsed remains but the crowds have gone and Jason's family and the community he called home has been left looking for a way to heal.

Terrance and other children who live in the neighborhood have found some solace and safety in a weekly Bible study group organized by a family new to the community.

“We moved here in November,” said Erica Griego as she set out snacks and drinks in her neat little 20th Street home, something which has become part of her Thursday evening routine. “I think God placed us here because I don't think we would've intentionally moved here, but we needed to find a more affordable place after my husband had some issues with his job.”

The Griego family, members of Victory Outreach church in San Bernardino, knew of the Spears cousins and remembered seeing the laughing and smiling boys in the neighborhood.

After the fatal shooting, the family opened up their home to their neighbors.

“We knew there was a need for healing,” said Griego from her kitchen, a sign on her counter proclaimed “Welcome to Life Group.”

Reaching Out

Part of Victory Outreach's mission — a church known for opening its doors to gang members, addicts and those just coming out of prison — is to reach out to communities in need, especially those that have fallen victim to gang violence and crime.

“We know how to reach people like this, because we lived it,” said Senior Pastor Rick Alanis. “I was in a gang and I was in jail, so I know what they are going through.”

“I really believe in that saying, ‘It takes a village to raise a child,’” Alanis continued. “We need to reach out to

those communities and give them an alternative to the gangs.”

Alanis says the church works to replace gangbangers and drug dealers as neighborhood role models.

The neighborhood where the Spears cousins lived has long been known as a crime hot spot.

This year alone, police have received close to 200 calls for service from the area, according to data from the San Bernardino Police Department. That breaks down to about three emergency calls a day.

Last year, police fielded 774 calls for service in the area, up from 632 in 2014.

Less than a week after Jason's death, San Bernardino police served several warrants in the neighborhood resulting in four arrests and the seizure of several items including gang and drug paraphernalia.

San Bernardino Police Chief Jarrod Burguan sees the benefit in community groups and churches and sees them as a positive presence in the city.

“Anywhere kids can get that positive influence and interaction is good, as well,” Burguan said. “Whether it's church affiliation or a positive mentor in their life, those things make a difference. ... Anything that gives at-risk kids an alternative to being out and about where they can get in trouble is a good thing and is needed, not just here, but everywhere.”

Usurping the criminal element firmly seated in high-crime areas can be difficult but not impossible.

“We need to give these communities the tools and resources they need in order to help turn these communities around,” said Terrence Stone, founder of Young Visionaries Youth Leadership. “But once they have it, then it's up to them to take those tools and use them.”

According to Stone, it can take up to five years of nurturing, supporting and actively working with a troubled neighborhood before real lasting change can be seen.

“What they need is persistence and consistence,” said Stone.

Finding Refuge

Shortly after 7 p.m. on a recent Thursday, high school and middle school students — most, if not all, friends of Jason and Terrance — began to trickle into the Griego home until the small two-bedroom unit was filled with nearly two dozen people.

They gathered in the living room where on one wall hung eight decorative crosses surrounding a message: “Always Believe That Something Wonderful Is About To Happen.”

They greeted group leaders, Pina Gonzalez, 21, and Louie De La Cruz, 29, with handshakes and hugs as videos of Christian rapper KP played in the background.

“We opened up the group to everyone, but it seems that the ones who are still consistently coming are Jason's friends. It's the kids,” said Gonzalez.

During each meeting, the leaders opened up the group asking for prayer requests from those in attendance.

“I do not want to hear any more shootings,” said Gabriel Duarte. “I hear them too much at night. I pray for that. No more shootings.”

Chyna Lundy, 16, has attended three group meetings and says it's become a ritual for her and her friends.

“First, we came because my friend's cousin was killed,” she said motioning over to Terrance. “It keeps us safe and out of the streets.”

For the soft spoken Terrance, the Griego house has provided more than just a place to worship weekly.

“I'm here, like, every day,” he said, shuffling his feet, adding the family has offered him support following the traumatic loss of his best friend and cousin. “I think what (the Griegos) are doing is wonderful. To them I say ‘Thank you.’”

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

San Bernardino seeks documents related to Sterling Water Project

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

Sunday, April 10, 2016

SAN BERNARDINO >> The city of San Bernardino is using the California Open Records Act to gain access to correspondence and records related to the East Valley Water District's proposed Sterling Water Recycling Plant.

In closed session last month, the San Bernardino City Council authorized legal staff to sue an undisclosed party, which was generally believed to be East Valley.

As of Friday, a lawsuit has not been filed.

Highland-based East Valley plans to build a wastewater recycling plant on the eastern edge of Highland and add the treated product to the Bunker Hill Groundwater Basin, which is at a historic low.

Currently East Valley sends six million gallons of sewage per day to the city of San Bernardino for treatment. Afterwards, that water is discharged into the Santa Ana River, where it flows outside this region.

"It's all about the water system. This project will produce water we don't have," said Douglas Headrick, general manager of the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, the regional water wholesaler, which is acting as a lead agency in part of the process to make the Sterling plant a reality.

The information request seeks correspondence between East Valley and Upland-based Lewis Homes, whose plans for a new subdivision in Highland depend on the completion of the Sterling plant, the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board and others.

Headrick said he is worried that the region will lose a window for possible state funding assistance for the East Valley project if it's perceived that there is disagreement in this area.

"At some point we have to learn to get along, or the money will go to somebody else in the state," Headrick said.

The available state funding is both grant money and very low-interest rate loans, he said.

"Valley District continues to believe engaged discussion is the best way to resolve disagreements among public agencies," Mark Bulot, Valley District's president, wrote to San Bernardino Mayor Carey Davis Thursday.

Bulot also wrote that constituents deserve elected officials who solve problems rather than turning to the judicial process. He asked the city to accept an offer to meet "as soon as possible, so we can resolve these important issues."

East Valley will comply with the information request, “which requires an extensive amount of staff time,” said spokeswoman Kelly Malloy.

Headrick said Valley District will comply with the open record request it also received.

“It is our job to develop supplemental water supplies,” Headrick said.

In March, the Valley District board certified the California Environmental Quality Act document related to the Sterling plant.

Because East Valley plans to develop its own treatment plant, and eventually discontinue sending its wastewater to San Bernardino, it will cost the San Bernardino Water District at least \$4.5 million annually for 20 years, according to a letter written by the agency’s attorney and sent to Valley District officials prior to last month’s CEQA vote.

San Bernardino is also planning a wastewater recycling plant project, which would recharge groundwater. East Valley’s participation was factored into the project.

A draft environmental impact report on San Bernardino’s recycled water plant addition is expected to be made public later this month, said Stacey Alstadt, general manager of the San Bernardino Municipal Water District.

“We believe both projects are viable,” Headrick said.

Because Sterling furthers San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District’s role of a water provider, it is acting as lead agency in East Valley’s project, Headrick said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/environment-and-nature/20160410/san-bernardino-seeks-documents-related-to-sterling-water-project>

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By [Shea Johnson](#)

[Print Page](#)

April 10, 2016 12:01AM

Civic Center plan calls for urban, multi-modal open space

VICTORVILLE — The Civic Center is being envisioned as an urban, multimodal open space that will someday abound with services, entertainment, restaurants, retail and other businesses, with the planned development in the heart of the city tied to sustainability efforts.

The City Council unanimously passed the [Civic Center Sustainability Specific Plan](#) this week, a reclassification of 473 acres of land in the Civic Center area on both sides of Interstate 15. The [plan's parameters](#) are generally understood to be Palmdale Road to the south; Roy Rogers and La Paz drives to the north; Borego and Amargosa roads to the west; and Seventh Street to the east.

It also includes properties on the northwest corner of Seneca and Amargosa roads, and development at the southeast and southwest corners of Palmdale Road and Park Avenue.

"The purpose of the Plan is to revitalize the plan area in a sustainable manner through in-fill development, land use criteria, development standards and improved vehicle and pedestrian circulation," according to a city staff report. "Some of the accomplishments of the Plan include incentives for energy efficient developments, protecting the civic core and the auto park through land use, limiting social services to a specific area, introducing a mixed-use zone, expanding pedestrian connectivity with pathways and bike lanes, introducing a way-finding signage program and promoting a healthy working and living environment."

Of its 11 stated objectives, several are aligned with sustainability: Improving air and water quality, protecting natural resources and agricultural lands, reducing automobile usage and fuel consumption, promoting water conservation and energy efficiency. Others are connected to quality of life standards such as promoting public health, increasing affordable housing and strengthening the local economy.

"I think it'll pay off and it'll serve us well in the future," Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox said Tuesday.

A draft of the plan lays out possibilities for its future, including buildings mounted with solar panels, designs providing natural shade and "weekend concerts, farmers markets, outdoor seating, and street fairs with vibrant pedestrian activity and social interaction."

It's the product of work by city staff, the Planning Commission, stakeholders and a four-month public review period ending March 18, 2014. It was spurred by a 2010 sustainability grant from the California Strategic Growth Council. Victorville was one of 24 cities and 44 total jurisdictions awarded a piece of \$23 million available in total funding.

"I just want to compliment staff. I know this has been a long process," Councilman Ryan McEachron said. "I think it's a tremendous accomplishment and I applaud you for what you've done."

Shea Johnson may be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@DP_Shea](#).

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160410/NEWS/160419996>

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By [Matthew Cabe](#)[Print Page](#)

April 10, 2016 12:01AM

AV, Victorville officials headed back to D.C. to lobby for transportation funding

APPLE VALLEY — Local officials from two municipalities will travel to Washington, D.C. Tuesday to again lobby for critical transportation funding that could help pay for the cash-strapped final phase of the Yucca Loma Corridor project.

As the lead agency on the trip, Apple Valley will send the entire Town Council and Town Manager Frank Robinson — among others — to meet with deputy directors from the U.S. Department of Transportation and lay out project specifics related to the estimated \$38 million expansion of Green Tree Boulevard, as well as what's needed to bring the project to completion.

Victorville will send City Manager Doug Robertson, Mayor Gloria Garcia and Councilman Ryan McEachron, who is also president of San Bernardino Associated Governments.

The representatives will lobby for approximately \$38 million and later apply for the Department of Transportation's new FASTLANE grant — a program authorized by the December passage of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act — as well as the notoriously competitive TIGER grant.

Robinson acknowledged the importance of the trip Monday when he said the Green Tree phase of the project — designed to connect Apple Valley to Interstate 15 via Yucca Loma Road — cannot be completed “without these funds.” He told the Daily Press, however, the strategy heading into the D.C. meetings is different this go round.

“We didn't realize they were going to do another TIGER grant,” Robinson said, “and when they announced it ... they lowered the threshold (for awarded funds) to a minimum of \$5 million ... Before it was \$10 million, (and) that makes it even more attractive to agencies like ours and Victorville's.”

Meanwhile, in Victorville, Robertson discussed his initial skepticism of traveling to the nation's capitol again for yet another round of lobbying for TIGER grant funding, which was denied to nearly 94 percent of 627 applications last year, including the joint application between Apple Valley and Victorville.

“When we were talking about just TIGER, I said no,” Robertson said. “I think this is our fourth attempt ... Last year — off the top of my head — TIGER is always super competitive. There was \$100 million (available), and ultimately they awarded more, which was kind of expected, but even with \$100 million plus, the pool was very shallow.”

But this year, the Department of Transportation has made \$500 million available in TIGER grants and \$800 million in FASTLANE grants — 25 percent of which is devoted specifically to rural projects — and that changed Robertson's mind.

“That's more than a \$1 billion between the two programs,” he said. “To me, that's what really put it over the top.”

The FASTLANE application is due Thursday, while TIGER applications are due April 29, and Robinson spoke to the importance of meeting with DOT officials prior to filing each application, which wasn't the case last year.

“We'll go through it with them, and they'll see a face and the strength of the collaboration between Victorville and Apple Valley,” he said. “We'll be able to address any questions or concerns they have. We get an opportunity to pitch the project and ask them questions to see if there's anything we can improve on the grant application itself.”

From Robertson's perspective, the fact that Yucca Loma Corridor is a collaborative project between the two municipalities bodes well.

“That's been my key message,” he said. “I have played the role of kind of (driving home) the fact that the town applying for a grant on behalf of another municipality is a unique project.”

In addition to DOT officials, the group will also meet with Rep. Paul Cook, R-Apple Valley, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California, both of whom have supported the project in the past, according to Robinson.

“They write letters of support, make phone calls on your behalf,” Robinson said, “and that's why it's so crucial to keep them updated. They're there trying to advocate on our behalf, but they can't do it unless they know what's going on.”

Robertson agreed.

“Having both of them write strong letters of support certainly helps,” he said. “And having them be able to defend it allows them to be our champions in the Senate and in the House.”

Matthew Cabe can be reached at MCabe@VVDailyPress.com or at 760-951-6254. Follow him on Twitter @DP_MatthewCabe.

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Town expects more tax money in future

By Juli Alsadi Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Friday, April 8, 2016 9:15 pm

YUCCA VALLEY — Town Council members heard 2016-18 funding and budget information and discussed the town's continued participation in the inmate work release program at their Tuesday meeting.

In keeping with the council's desire for adequate public review and discussion, staff presented the partnership funding requests submitted by various nonprofit organizations throughout the Basin. Based on results of strategic planning sessions, the Town Council directed staff to keep general fund spending levels consistent with those of the fiscal years 2014-16 for the next two year budget cycles.

An important component of the review process included the amount of in-kind funding the town provided to each organization, with those receiving more considered lower priority than those not receiving such assistance.

In all, the council approved allocations totaling \$102,000 to eight of the twelve organizations requesting assistance from the town, in accordance with staff recommendations.

Finance manager Sharon Cisneros provided a look at the proposed budget for the 2016-18 fiscal year, with anticipated revenues of \$10.1 million in the first year and \$10.3 million in the second.

Included are increases of property and sales taxes with estimated growth rates of 3 percent annually, an increase in transient occupancy tax and an increase in facility use revenues.

The proposed two-year budget is expected to provide excess revenue over expenditures of just over \$103,000 in 2016-17, and \$46,000 in 2017-18.

While a surplus is always preferable to a deficit, it is inadequate to fully fund the many current and future needs of the community, including the two identified as priorities by council members following strategic planning sessions.

"Infrastructure remains under-funded, and we have incurred significant long term costs due to deferred maintenance," Cisneros said. "We also have public safety needs that still need funding. Existing service levels haven't been modified since 2009, and trends indicate we are in real need of



Town expects more tax money in future

Mayor Robert Leone recognizes Yucca Valley patrol officer Deputy Marcus Murray for his Footprinters Officer of the Year award.

additional public safety staff, specifically more deputies to do investigations.”

Results of a community survey regarding a proposed revenue measure are expected in May, around the time the town will develop a supplemental budget based on any projected additional revenues.

“If the survey results come back positive, the supplemental budget would then address the two items missing from this one,” Cisneros said. The official budget adoption is scheduled for May 17.

Inmate employees a liability risk

As a member of Public Agency Risk Sharing Authority of California, the town is covered for employment practices liability through an agency called Employment Risk Management Authority (ERMA). Recently the ERMA board amended its coverage to specifically exclude anyone performing services while incarcerated.

With that change, the town is at risk for the entire liability if someone files a claim involving a prison inmate working for the town on the work-release program.

Council members continued a decision on whether to continue using inmates until town staff can get more information on liability insurance.

Officer of Year Deputy Murray recognized

At the opening of the meeting Mayor Robert Leone presented Deputy Marcus Murray with a plaque recognizing his award as Footprinters Officer of the Year. Leone also issued proclamations declaring April Child Abuse Awareness Month, and another declaring the period from April 8 to 13 as the national “You Drive, You Text, You Pay,” Distracted Driving Enforcement Campaign in Yucca Valley.

“Distracted drivers will receive warnings during this period of education,” Leone said. “After the educational portion of the campaign ends, citations will again be issued to violators.”

Council members also approved Rick Denison’s nomination of Andrea Riesgo to serve as commissioner to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Commission.

Due to a lack of agenda items the April 19 meeting was cancelled, so the next regular meeting of the Yucca Valley Town Council will be held at 6 p.m. May 3 in the community center.

By [Matthew Cabe](#)[Print Page](#)

April 10, 2016 12:01AM

Voting rights initiative nears signature requirement

APPLE VALLEY — An initiative that would allow residents to vote on the town's use of bonds to pay for acquisition of the water system owned by Liberty Utilities, Apple Valley is close to completing its first significant hurdle toward landing a spot on the November ballot, according to the manager of the signature-gathering process.

Brent Johnson, who manages numerous initiatives, told the Daily Press about 750 signatures are needed to reach the required amount, which is 10 percent of registered voters in the town, or approximately 3,100 total signatures.

If adopted, the initiative — informally titled “The Right to Vote on Debt Act” — would amend the Apple Valley municipal code to add a requirement that voters approve by a majority vote “any public debt over \$10 million” that provides funds for the acquisition of an enterprise, according to a previous Daily Press report.

The “public debt” mentioned in the statement is in reference to bonds the town would likely use to fund acquisition by eminent domain of Liberty's water system, according to spokesperson for the initiative.

Speaking from Spokane, Washington where he's based, Johnson said he expects completion of the signature gathering this week. He added that residents have been responsive during the process.

“(Residents) feel that they should have a say and a right to vote on (public debt),” Johnson said. “To me it's a no-brainer issue. If you're spending that money, you should have voter approval ... Our motto is people should have a right to vote on any issue — whether we agree with the issue or not. We believe in democracy. We believe in ‘We the people,’ not the powers that be.”

The “powers that be” in this case — the Town of Apple Valley and, more specifically, the Town Council — have stayed mum on the issue since signature gathering began in January; Town spokeswoman Kathie Martin previously told the Daily Press the town can't comment on the initiative until the signatures are filed with the town clerk.

Once all the signatures are collected, they will be submitted to the town clerk, according to Randy Terrell of Passantino Andersen Communications, the public relations firm involved in the initiative's campaign.

“The Town has 30 working days to verify that the signatures are valid and the measure has qualified,” Terrell said. “(After that), it will go to the ballot in November for voters to decide.”

“The Right to Vote on Debt Act” was proposed by Apple Valley residents Chuck and Pat Hanson, and the Daily Press reported in December that Ranchos was financially backing the initiative.

Following Liberty Utilities' purchase of Ranchos, it was initially unclear whether Liberty would continue to fund the initiative, but President of Liberty Utilities California Greg Sorensen told the Daily Press nothing has changed with regard to the financial backing.

“It's not Liberty's preference or way that we want to be coming into a community, being at odds with the town or the Town Council,” Sorensen said. “Our way of operating is to form a good working relationship with the town and (to) work collaboratively on issues. I wish we were spending more time in that manner. I think it would be a lot more productive if we were talking about what projects should be done by the water company. How can we attract growth, bring jobs, and create a better overall environment?”

Despite his desire for a less strenuous relationship with the town, Sorensen added that the initiative proposed by the Hansons — who aren't Liberty customers — is important to Apple Valley residents.

“Support for this measure, I think, really gets back to allowing citizens ... a voice in (the) incurring (of) large amounts of debt that they and potentially their children would have to repay,” he said. “It's allowing citizens to be more involved ... in the choices that are made by government. I think if that's what this ballot measure brings forth and achieves then it's a successful endeavor. I can't see the counter (argument) to this saying no citizens should have a voice in how the town's business is being done.”

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<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160410/NEWS/160419995>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Ruling on LA County's cross sends the right message to public officials: Opinion

By Kevin Modesti, San Bernardino County Sun

Thursday, April 7, 2016



A judge has slapped down the Los Angeles County supervisors who wanted to put a Christian cross on the county seal.

Thank goodness.

It's doubtful that those supervisors will get the message, but here's hoping other public officials will take the hint now that having a religious symbol on an official government seal violates American principles.

In this case [U.S. District Judge Christina A. Snyder cited the California Constitution](#) in saying the 3-2 vote by the Board of

Supervisors in 2014 vote to restore the cross to the seal's image of the San Gabriel Mission was an illegal attempt to promote Christianity over other beliefs.

The effort led by Mike Antonovich and Don Knabe was disrespectful to those of other faiths — or no faith.

Worse, the two supervisors shamed themselves by misrepresenting their goal. They claimed that they weren't trying to thump the Bible, that they just wanted to present a historically accurate depiction of the San Gabriel Mission. The cross had been temporarily missing from the actual mission at the time in 2004 when supervisors approved a redesigned seal.

The truth was confirmed in emails revealed in the lawsuit that led to Thursday's ruling, including emails from Antonovich in which he described opponents of the county seal's cross as "church burning" "storm troopers" and described a newspaper as "secular extremist" (sic).

This battle against public officials who want to force their beliefs on people who don't share them is being fought constantly, on many fronts. It's going on now [in the Chino Valley school district](#), where board members want to preserve their freedom to proselytize in official meetings.

At least there the board members are up-front about the intended effects of their actions.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/opinion/20160407/ruling-on-la-countys-cross-sends-the-right-message-to-public-officials-opinion>

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The New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/20uDiOq>

U.S.

In California, Marijuana Is Smelling More Like Big Business

By IAN LOVETT APRIL 11, 2016

ADELANTO, Calif. — After decades of thriving in legally hazy backyards and basements, California’s most notorious crop, marijuana, is emerging from the underground into a decidedly capitalist era.

Under a new state law, marijuana businesses will be allowed to turn a profit — which has been forbidden since 1996, when California became the first state to legalize medical cannabis — and limits on the number of plants farmers can grow will be eliminated.

The opening of the marijuana industry here to corporate dollars has caused a mad scramble, with out-of-state investors, cannabis retailers and financially strapped municipalities all racing to grab a piece of what is effectively a new industry in California: legalized, large-scale marijuana farming.

And with voters widely expected to approve recreational marijuana use in November, California, already the world’s largest legal market for marijuana, gleams with the promise of profits far beyond what pot shops and growers

have seen in Washington or Colorado, the first states to approve recreational use.

“People are definitely salivating over the California market,” said Troy Dayton, chief executive of the ArcView Group, a research firm in the Bay Area that specializes in marijuana. “It’s huge, and Californians love cannabis so much.”

In search of a tax windfall, cities across the Southern California desert, like Adelanto and Desert Hot Springs, have raced to be first to permit commercial marijuana cultivation. The price of land here tripled almost overnight as entrepreneurs bought up every inch of property where pot-growing was permitted — most of it bare desert dotted with only Joshua trees and tumbleweeds.

And celebrities who for years have supported the open use of marijuana are also seeking a piece of the action: Musicians like Snoop Dogg and one of Bob Marley’s sons, Ky-Mani Marley, have been meeting with officials about licensing marijuana grown here.

Amid the frenzy, though, anxiety is growing in some corners of the state that corporate money will squeeze out not only the small-time growers, but also the hippie values that have been an essential part of marijuana’s place in California culture.

Tommy Chong, of Cheech and Chong fame, has long been synonymous with California’s outlaw stoner culture, growing his own pot and crafting bongos from kombucha bottles at his Los Angeles home. Now he is negotiating with a corporate partner to license his own brand of legal marijuana.

“If conglomerates come in, my answer is: God bless ’em — it saves me the hassle,” Mr. Chong, 77, said in a telephone interview.

“Fashion changes, haircuts change,” Mr. Chong said. “We go through

cultural changes.”

But Patrick Murphy, a cannabis farmer in Humboldt County, a lush area on the northwest coast long famed for growing high-quality pot, said he had already seen a “corporate takeover” of the marijuana industry in many other states.

“In California, especially in Humboldt, we have a code of conduct: Respect the land and respect the people,” he said. “I don’t want that culture to be replaced by guys in \$5,000 suits.”

Twenty-three states allow some form of legal marijuana, and up to 20 will consider ballot measures this year to further ease restrictions.

California is now making the largest effort in the country’s history to pull marijuana out of the black market. Medical marijuana sales in California hit \$2.7 billion last year, accounting for nearly half of all legal marijuana sales in the country, according to ArcView and New Frontier, another cannabis research company. Approval of recreational marijuana use in November could double the market here by 2020, experts said.

The law will take full effect by 2018, when a medical marijuana czar will institute licensing, testing of products and tracking from “seed to sale.” Aside from the all-cash business model — banks are prohibited under federal law from doing business with companies that grow, sell or process marijuana — the entire industry will be out in the open.

“There has been a shadow cast over this industry,” said Rob Bonta, a state assemblyman who co-sponsored the new marijuana regulations, which Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law in October. “This is more and more being seen as a legitimate business, and now we hope businesses can come out of the shadows.”

In Desert Hot Springs, CalCann Holdings, a medical marijuana holding

company, is planning to build a high-tech greenhouse, along with a kitchen to produce edible products for its dispensaries in Orange County. The company expects to produce 8,000 pounds of marijuana a year over four or five annual harvests.

By bringing marijuana into a legal framework, said Aaron Herzberg, general counsel for CalCann, companies like his will be able to “bring modern agricultural techniques to the production of cannabis.”

“We’re transitioning out of the complete free-for-all, wild West,” he added. “It will be like alcohol — you can’t just set up a still and produce it in your garage. You have to apply for permits and pay taxes.”

A group of Humboldt County farmers, including Mr. Murphy, have agreed to sell their cannabis under a single banner, Emerald Family Farms, to compete with “mega-grows” like the one CalCann is planning.

“Cannabis started as a counterculture,” said Ryan McIntosh, a cannabis farmer. “I think there are some people who will have no desire to purchase from giant cannabis groups.”

Still, Mr. McIntosh, 42, said he was eager for a new era when he could stop worrying that his children would see him arrested in a raid. “I don’t want to hide anymore,” he said.

Adelanto, a rough-edged community in the high desert northeast of Los Angeles, is hoping to become a very different kind of pot mecca from Humboldt County. Envisioning a row of high-tech grow houses where there is now only a flat expanse of desert, Mayor Richard Kerr said that the growers might need to build solar plants to support all the energy it would take to produce more than 100 tons of marijuana each year.

He estimated that the annual tax revenue from the influx of marijuana growers could top \$10 million, nearly the size of the city’s budget last year.

Given the state's ongoing drought, farmers have already begun marketing themselves as environmentally friendly, despite all the electricity required to grow marijuana indoors.

"They all have irrigation systems, where the water goes down into the soil and they can recycle it," Mr. Kerr said. "We're trying to stay on the green side of things here."

As she sold Girl Scout cookies outside a supermarket with her granddaughter, Sherree Harris-Johnson, 57, said she had changed her mind about marijuana after she heard that pot companies would be required to hire half of their workers locally. Unemployment in Adelanto remains above 10 percent, and prisons are the primary employers.

"All I want it to do is bring some jobs," Ms. Harris-Johnson said.

Correction: April 11, 2016

A previous version of this article incorrectly identified the first two states to approve the recreational use of marijuana. They were Colorado and Washington, not Colorado and Oregon.

Mail-In Ballots Are Convenient, But Also Present Challenges



Workers at the San Francisco Department of Elections sort stacks of vote-by-mail ballots by precinct. (*Justin Sullivan/Getty Images*)

The first wave of mail-in ballots for California's June primary is going out now to military and overseas voters. Ballots for most vote-by-mail voters will go out in May.

Voting by mail is becoming an increasingly popular choice. In California's 2014 general election, [more than 60 percent](#) of votes cast came via mail-in ballots, an all-time high. The method has become so popular that a bill pending in the state Legislature would let counties conduct [all-mail ballot elections](#).

But Kim Nalder, with the [Project for an Informed Electorate](#), says there are some shortcomings voters should be aware of. For instance, she says research shows mail-in ballots have higher error rates.

"But that's mostly because many of the in-person systems allow the voters to essentially check," she

says. “So if you voted too many times in the same race, then it’ll kick it out and you’ll have a chance to redo it. If you do it at home, obviously, there’s no check until it’s too late.”

And in a rapidly changing political landscape, Nalder says there’s a chance things could change between when a vote is cast and the actual election.

“So, if a candidate drops out, perhaps, you’ve already voted for that person and it’s too late to redo that,” she says. “Or if some scandal erupts at the last minute or something happens, you learn new information that might have changed your mind on an initiative, it’s too late once you’ve mailed it in.”

But mail-in ballots do have one big advantage — they make it more convenient to cast a ballot. And Nalder says it’s a good thing any time a barrier to voting is removed.

Another plus: You have some leeway when sending in your vote. Vote-by-mail ballots [must be postmarked](#) on or before Election Day and arrive at your county elections office within three days of the election.

A lot of new voters are expected to cast ballots in this year’s primary. Secretary of State Alex Padilla says more than 600,000 people have registered to vote or updated their registration through his office’s website since the beginning of the year.

“I have no doubt that our voting systems can handle it, but it is something we want to make sure that we are prepared for,” he says. “So I have requested additional resources from the governor and the Legislature.”

Padilla has requested [\\$32 million](#) from the governor and Legislature to help his office and county election offices prepare for what he’s calling a surge of voters. That is in addition to the [\\$450 million](#) Padilla would like to have to replace aging voting equipment in the state.

Two checks: State lawmakers collect public pensions and legislator's salaries



Sen. John Moorlach (R-Costa Mesa), second from right, bids farewell to fellow lawmakers at the end of the Senate floor session in Sacramento on Sept. 11, 2015. Moorlach is a leading voice in the Legislature against skyrocketing debt being piled up by public pension systems. (Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

By **Patrick McGreevy**

APRIL 10, 2016, 12:05 AM | REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO

Republican state Sen. John Moorlach of Costa Mesa has emerged as a leading voice in the Legislature against skyrocketing debt piled up by public pension systems.

But some in the pension reform movement say the former Orange County treasurer may be contributing to the problem: Moorlach receives an \$83,827 government pension check from the Orange County Employees Retirement System while making \$100,113 a year as a senator.

At least 16 other state lawmakers collect two checks each month, including Assemblyman Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove), who retired two years ago at 50 as a captain in the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department. When added to his legislative pay, Cooper's annual pension of \$173,820 brings his total income each year to \$273,000.

Advocates for a pension system overhaul say legislators are entitled to the benefits they earned. But, they add, the costly pension perk is an example of what is wrong with public retirement benefits: Government workers can retire too soon with lucrative benefits that the pension systems cannot sustain.

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"It's a form of double-dipping, which makes a lot of people angry," said former San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, who is planning a pension reform initiative for the 2018 state ballot. "Most of us have to work until we are 65 or 67 before we can retire when Social Security kicks in."

It's legal under current rules, said Dan Pellissier, president of the group California Pension Reform.

"But the optics are poor, certainly for an elected official to be taking another public salary after retiring," Pellissier said.

The information was gathered by a search of pension system records by the Los Angeles Times just as public policy makers are debating both legislative pay and excesses in public pensions.

Last month, state Controller Betty Yee reported that the public pension system has a long-term unfunded liability of \$63.7 billion.

On April 27, a state panel will meet to consider whether to grant pay raises to California lawmakers who already receive the highest base pay of any legislators in the country, \$100,113, far above second-place Pennsylvania's roughly \$85,000.

Reed's proposed initiative to rein in pension costs, including a requirement for voters to approve benefits, would be the most serious attempt to address projected pension shortfalls since 2012, when Gov. Jerry Brown pushed through changes affecting future government employees.

The Legislature passed a law that orders current state employees to pay a greater share of the cost of their pension, and requiring new public employees who are not in public safety jobs to work until 67 to get full retirement benefits.

Brown said at the time that the bill was "not perfect" and that more changes may be needed in the state retirement system.

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Assemblyman Tom W. Lackey (R-Palmdale) agrees that additional action is required to make public pensions sustainable, but he defended his benefits. Lackey was 54 when he retired as a

sergeant with the California Highway Patrol.

He receives an annual pension of \$111,792 from the California Public Employees' Retirement System in addition to his \$97,188 legislative salary. He did not accept a pay raise last year.

Lackey said the low retirement age for law enforcement officers and firefighters is justified.

"There is clearly room for improvement on the sustainability issue," Lackey said. "I do believe in my situation, law enforcement pensions deserve unique consideration just because of the danger and all the circumstances that surround that type of career."

Lackey said 56 CHP officers died in the line of duty during his 28 years with the agency. He also noted that current state lawmakers do not accrue credit for a pension.

The rules approved by Brown in 2012 apply to local public pension systems, including the one in Orange County, but the new retirement age does not affect those like Moorlach who were already employed.

He retired at age 59 just before he joined the Senate, and his retirement check is based on 19.7 years of service that included time on the Orange County Board of Supervisors and as the county treasurer.

When asked about several legislators collecting pension checks on top of salaries, Moorlach said, "It's not the people who are bad. It's the system that's bad. We've got to fix the system."

Moorlach said he warned in 2004 that the county was making a "massive mistake" by boosting retirement benefits. It went from a formula with a retirement age of 65 to one providing a share of salary payable beginning at 55.

After being told he could not opt out of the county retirement system, he abided by its rules, but he decided after retiring at 59 that he could still provide public service, he said.

"I could easily have retired at age 60, but I had a lot of my friends who said, 'We still want you involved, we want you to run.' I did it for public service," Moorlach said, adding that he agrees that the current system encourages public officials to retire early.

His acceptance of a county retirement check and a state paycheck also concerned one of his allies, Marcia Fritz, president of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility, which has pressed for pension reform.

"That doesn't look good," Fritz said. "I hate to say this publicly about John, but it's double-dipping."

Fritz, who advised Brown's office on his 2012 plan, said one solution to the problem would be to adopt rules similar to Social Security, which reduces retirement pay if the person goes back to work and earns more than a small amount.

"Something like that would be reasonable," she said. "We should do what we can to discourage people from retiring too soon."

State legislators are paid \$100,113 annually but many receive government pension checks at the same time, including:

Assemblyman Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove)



(Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: \$173,820

Government service: Cooper retired two years ago at age 50 as a captain with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department.

Biographical details: He is former chairman of the Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee.

Sen. Jean Fuller (R-Bakersfield)

Annual public pension: \$112,980

Government service: Fuller spent 30 years in public education and was superintendent of the Keppel Union School District.

Biographical details: She is the Senate Republican leader and is vice chairwoman of the Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee. Fuller is also a member of the Senate Public Employment and Retirement Committee.



(Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

Assemblyman Tom W. Lackey (R-Palmdale)



(Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: \$111,792

Government service: Lackey retired at age 54 as a sergeant with the California Highway Patrol.

Biographical details: He did not accept a pay raise last year, so he receives a Senate salary of \$97,188. Lackey is vice chairman of the Assembly Committee on Accountability and Administrative Review.

Assemblywoman Shirley Weber (D-San Diego)



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Annual public pension: \$103,000

Government service: Weber taught at California State L.A. and Los Angeles City College. She was also a professor at San Diego State.

Biographical details: She spent decades in higher education and has spent her time in the Assembly serving on the Appropriations, Budget, Education and Higher Education committees among others.

Sen. John Moorlach (R-Costa Mesa)



(Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: \$83,827

Government service: Former Orange County treasurer and member of the Orange County Board of Supervisors with a total of about 19 years of county service.

Biographical details: An outspoken critic of unsustainable pension benefits, Moorlach is a member of the Senate Public Employment and Retirement Committee. He is vice chairman of the Judiciary Committee and serves on the Budget and Fiscal Review and Governance and Finance committees.

Assemblyman Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-South Los Angeles)



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Annual public pension: \$83,544

Government service: Jones-Sawyer worked for the city of Los Angeles in roles including director of asset management and assistant deputy mayor.

Biographical details: He is chairman of the Public Safety Committee and serves on the Higher Education, Government Organization and Agriculture committees. He is the former chairman of the Los Angeles County Small Business Commission.

Assemblyman José Medina (D-Riverside)

Annual public pension: \$63,420



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Government service: Medina retired in 2012 after many years as a teacher with the Riverside Unified School District.

Biographical details: He was a school board member on the Jurupa Unified School District Board of Education and completed three terms on the Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees. Medina is chairman of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

Sen. Marty Block (D-San Diego)



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Annual public pension: \$59,481

Government service: Block served as a dean, professor and legal advisor at San Diego State.

Biographical details: He served as a San Diego Superior Court judge pro tem and statewide president of the California County Boards of Education. He chairs the Senate Education Budget Subcommittee, the Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions and the Legislative Jewish Caucus.

Assemblyman Richard Gordon (D-Menlo Park)

Annual public pension: \$51,293

Government service: He spent 13 years on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, which was a full-time job with benefits.

Biographical details: Gordon chairs the Assembly's Committee on Rules and serves on the Budget committee.



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Sen. Richard Roth (D-Riverside)



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Annual public pension: \$45,566

Government service: Roth is a former major general in the U.S. Air Force.

Biographical details: Roth has turned down pay increases in his Senate salary since his election, so he receives \$90,540 annually. He is chairman of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on State Administration and General Government, and the Insurance Committee. He is vice-chairman of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

Sen. James Beall (D-San José)



Annual public pension: \$40,320

Government service: Beall is a former member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and former urban planner for the cities of Santa Cruz and Los Gatos.

Biographical details: He is chairman of the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee, and is a member of the Public Employment and

(Associated Press)

Retirement; Appropriations; Budget and Fiscal Review; and Governance and Finance committees.

He also sits on the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills)



(Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: \$19,140

Government service: Pavley taught in public schools for more than two decades, completing her teaching career in Moorpark before she retired in July 2004.

Biographical details: She is the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee chairwoman, and serves on committees including Budget and Fiscal Review and Governance and Finance. She

was also mayor of Agoura Hills.

Assemblyman Kansen Chu (D-San José)



(Rich Pedroncelli / AP)

Annual public pension: \$18,276

Government service: He worked as an aide to legislators and served seven years on the San José City Council.

Biographical details: He served on the Berryessa Union School Board District and is chairman of the Assembly Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism and Internet Media committee. He also serves on the Committee on Labor and Employment and the Jobs, Economic Development and the Economy and

Transportation committees.

Sen. Lois Wolk (D-Davis)



(Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: \$11,827

Government service: Wolk served from 1998 to 2002 as an elected member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors before retiring from county service.

Biographical details: She is Senate majority whip and is chairwoman of the Senate Budget Subcommittee and No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and Transportation. Wolk is the former mayor of Davis.

Sen. Carol Liu (D-La Cañada-Flintridge)



(Rich Pedroncelli/AP)

Annual public pension: \$8,880

Government service: Liu was a teacher in Richmond public schools, teaching history at the junior and senior high levels. She became a school administrator before retiring in 1996.

Biographical details: She is chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee and serves on the Insurance, Public Safety, Human Services and Elections and Constitutional Amendments committees.

Assemblyman Richard Bloom (D-Santa Monica)

Annual public pension: \$5,239

Government service: Bloom served for 13 years on the Santa Monica City Council, where he served as mayor three times.



(Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Biographical details: He also served as a volunteer judge pro tem and mediator for Los Angeles County Superior Courts. He is a member of Assembly committees including Budget, Appropriations and Higher Education.

Assemblyman Rocky Chávez (R-Oceanside)



(Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

Annual public pension: Requests made by the *Times* for information about Chávez's annual pension were not answered by Chávez and military representatives.

Government service: Chávez spent more than 28 years as a U.S. Marine, rising to the rank of colonel and serving as chief of staff for the 4th Marine Division.

Biographical details: He is vice chairman of the Assembly Veterans Affairs committee, and sits on the Budget and Joint Legislative Budget committees, among others.

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[How many millionaires does California send to Congress?](#)

Governor Brown's Long Road to Retiree Health Cost Relief



Posted by : [Ed Mendel](#) April 10, 2016

Gov. Brown's plan to reduce state worker retiree health care costs got only a small nod in a tentative CSU faculty contract agreement last week. But three unions have agreed to begin paying down one of the state's fastest-growing costs and largest debts.

Part of the plan Brown proposed last year hit a wall of opposition in the Legislature. An optional low-cost health plan would have taken less from the paycheck, but more from the pocket before insurance begins paying medical expenses.

The new state budget Brown proposed in January still expects major long-term savings from the retiree health care plan requiring state workers to begin paying some of the cost while on the job, work longer to become eligible, and pay higher premiums after retiring.

"Even though the private sector is eliminating these types of benefits, the state can preserve retiree health benefits for career workers," said the governor's Finance department [budget summary](#).

How fast are costs growing?

The state paid \$458 million in 2001 (0.6 percent of the general fund) for state worker retiree health care

and is expected to pay \$2 billion (1.7 percent of the general fund) next fiscal year — up 80 percent in just the last decade. (see Finance chart below)

The debt or “unfunded liability” for retiree health care promised state workers has grown to \$74.1 billion, state controller Betty [Yee reported](#) in January — much larger than the unfunded liability reported by CalPERS for state worker pensions, \$43.3 billion.

As the budget summary noted, employer paid retiree health care is rare in the private sector. And in what Brown has called an “anomaly,” the state pays a larger share of retiree health care costs for retirees than for active workers.

The state usually pays 100 percent of the health care insurance premium for retirees and 90 percent of the premium for dependents. For active workers, the state pays 80 to 85 percent of the premium and for their dependents 80 percent, depending on bargaining.

State workers, who can retire as early as age 50 though few do, are expected to switch to federal Medicare when they become eligible at age 65. A state supplement continues to cover costs not paid by Medicare.

Brown's plan, meanwhile, could take decades to cut costs. But without action, said the budget summary, the state worker retiree health care debt could grow to \$100 billion in five years and to \$300 billion in three decades.

The big change puts money into a pension-like investment fund to yield earnings that can help pay retiree health care in the future. CalPERS expects its investment fund, valued at \$288 billion last week, to pay two-thirds of future pension costs.

The state has only been paying annual retiree health care premiums, setting no money aside to “prefund” or pay for the retiree health care earned by active workers each year.

This “pay-as-you-go” policy forces future generations to help pay for the cost of current workers. By passing on the debt, lawmakers have more money to spend on other programs.

In the early 1990s, legislation by former Assemblyman Dave Elder, D-Long Beach, created an investment fund for state worker retiree health care. But lawmakers chose not to put money into the fund.

Figure SWE-01
State Retirement and Health Care Contributions¹
(Dollars in Millions)

	CalPERS ²	CSU CalPERS	CalSTRS	JRS	JRS II	LRS	Active Health & Dental ³	Retiree Health & Dental	CSU Retiree Health
2007-08	\$2,999		\$1,623 ⁴	\$162	\$37	\$0	\$2,020	\$1,114	
2008-09	3,063		1,133	189	40	0	2,146	1,183	
2009-10	2,861		1,191	184	32	0	2,120	1,182	
2010-11	3,230		1,200	166	54	0	2,277	1,387	
2011-12	3,174		1,259	195	58	0	2,439	1,505	
2012-13	2,948 ⁵	\$449 ⁶	1,303	160	51	0	2,567	1,365 ⁷	\$222 ⁸
2013-14	3,269	474	1,360	188	52	1	2,697	1,383	225
2014-15	4,042	543	1,486	179	63	1	2,797	1,462	256
2015-16 ⁹	4,338	585	1,935	190	67	1	2,938	1,585	264
2016-17 ⁹	4,829	636	2,468	202	68	1	3,131	1,744	291

¹ The chart does not include contributions for University of California pension or retiree health care costs.

² In addition to the Executive Branch, this includes Judicial and Legislative Branch employees. Contributions for judges and elected officials are included in JRS, JRS II, and LRS.

³ These amounts include health, dental, and vision contributions for employees within state civil service, the Judicial and Legislative Branches, and CSU.

⁴ Includes repayment of \$500 million from Supplemental Benefit Maintenance Account lawsuit.

⁵ Beginning in 2012-13, CSU pension and health care costs are displayed separately.

⁶ Estimated as of the 2016-17 Governor's Budget. 2016-17 General Fund costs are estimated to be \$2,534 million for CalPERS, \$636 million for CSU CalPERS, \$2,030 million for Retiree Health & Dental, and \$1,554 million for Active Health and Dental. The remaining totals are all General Fund.

Brown's plan, as in his previous pension reform, calls for the state and its current employees to pay equal shares of the "normal cost," a contribution to the investment fund to cover the estimated cost of the retiree health care earned during a year.

But as with pensions, only the state, not the employee, has to pay for the debt from previous years often caused by investments failing to earn the expected amount, a big risk at the center of the public pension debate.

Brown's plan also requires five more years of service to become eligible for retiree health care. Current workers are eligible for 50 percent coverage after 10 years on the job, increasing to 100 percent after 20 years. The new thresholds are 15 and 25 years.

A third part of the plan eventually ends the anomaly of employer-paid health coverage increasing on retirement, regarded by some as an incentive for early retirement. For new hires, retiree health coverage is capped at the level of active workers.

"Over the next 50 years, this approach will save \$240 billion statewide," said the state budget summary. "The Budget sets aside \$300 million General Fund to pay for potential increases in employee compensation as part of these good faith negotiations."

Pay raises are part of three new state worker contracts bargained by the Brown administration that begin prefunding retiree health care under the governor's plan.

A tentative contract with the California Correctional Peace Officers Association last month, which members are being asked to ratify now, phases in a retiree health contribution of 4 percent of pay by

2019 along with three annual 3 percent pay raises.

A contract with a scientists union phases in a 2.8 percent retiree health contribution by 2019 with three 5 percent annual pay raises. An engineers contract phases in a 2 percent contribution by 2019 with a 5 percent pay raise next year and a 2 percent raise the following year.

The state has not reached an agreement on another contract that expired last July, crafts and maintenance. It's one of three bargaining units that began prefunding retiree health care prior to the governor's plan, contributing 0.5 percent of pay.

Physicians are contributing 0.5 percent of pay under a contract that expires this July. State worker retiree health care prefunding began in 2010 with the Highway Patrol contributing 0.5 percent of pay, which is now 2 percent until 2018.

The big round of state worker retire health care bargaining begins when 15 contracts expire this July, nine of them in bargaining units represented by the largest state worker union, SEIU Local 1000.

California State University employees have been paying less for the same pension received by most state workers, 5 percent of pay instead of 8 percent. To shift the shortfall in employee funding to CSU, the Brown administration [*reduced its funding.*](#)

The tentative contract announced last week, negotiated by CSU not the Brown administration, averted a strike by giving a 10.5 percent pay raise over two years to a CSU faculty that contended its pay has lagged UC and community colleges for a decade.

A CSU faculty association summary of the agreement shows no change in the pension contribution. But for faculty hired after July 1, 2017, ten years of service will be needed to be eligible for retiree health care, up from five years for current employees.

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's [*Office suggested*](#) last year that there is "some ambiguity" about whether retiree health care is, like pensions, a "vested right" widely believed to be protected against cuts by a series of state court decisions.

Possibly strengthening the right to retiree health care was not mentioned as an incentive in the negotiations that led to the first contract that the state budget summary said "lays out the approach" for the Brown retiree health care plan.

"Vesting didn't come up in bargaining," said Bruce Blanning, executive director of Professional Engineers in California Government. "It wasn't implied or suggested at all."